

MEETING RECORD

NAME OF GROUP: Urban Design Committee

DATE, TIME AND

PLACE OF MEETING:

Wednesday, February 5, 2003, 3:00 p.m., Room 206, County-City Building, 2nd Floor, 555 South 10th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska

MEMBERS AND OTHERS

IN ATTENDANCE:

Members: Dennis Scheer, Gordon Scholz (departed at 4:05 p.m.), Kim Todd (arrived at 3:18 p.m.), JoAnne Kissel and Scott Sullivan

Others: Mark Canney, J.J. Yost, Lynn Johnson (Parks & Recreation); Trevor Hull (Erickson Sullivan Architects) Jack Lynch (Olsson Associates), Wayne Teten (Public Works), Ed Zimmer, Marvin Krout and Michele Abendroth (Planning Department)

STATED PURPOSE

OF THE MEETING:

Regular Meeting of the Urban Design Committee

Approval of meeting notes, January 8, 2003

Mr. Gordon moved to approve the minutes of the January 8, 2003 meeting, seconded by Ms. Kissel.

Motion for approval carried 4-0. Scheer, Scholz, Kissel, and Sullivan voting 'yes'. Todd, Eckert, and Oforah absent.

Miscellaneous

Lynn Johnson of the Parks and Recreation Department stated that they wanted to talk to the committee about policy guidance regarding the addition of landscaping within the public right-of-way. He stated that through the process of designing the East O Street project, additional landscaping was desired. He added that they felt we needed more irrigation to get the landscaping established and deal with seasonal drought. Then the issue became who should pay for the water, because the water system can not just donate the water. Mr. Johnson noted that the street funds are being used to maintain the medians, which for basic landscaping, that is not unreasonable. However, they feel that the street funds generally should not be paying for water.

Another example is Vine Street between 27th Street and the east entrance to campus as there is additional landscaping there. The intent was to make that a landscape corridor to the entrance to campus, but it set a precedent. Mr. Johnson continued by stating that they felt like we need a public process for saying that there are some places that are so special that additional landscaping is appropriate. He suggested that the City Council possibly should look at this issue and set up a fund to pay for it. He also suggested that the Urban Design Committee be involved in making the determination on the places that are so important that they have a higher landscape standard and then go to the City Council. Mr. Johnson stated that criteria need to be in place to make that determination.

Mr. Scheer asked who would make the determination if an area is under compliance with the criteria. Mr. Johnson stated that Parks and Rec. would come to this committee to make that recommendation, but it is not this committee's job to determine how it will be funded. Mr. Sullivan stated that the Urban Design Committee is an advisory group and he believed that this committee does not have that political power. Mr. Scheer stated that it makes him nervous that this committee would have to identify if something meets the standard without any kind of urban design analysis. He suggested having city staff identify the reasons why a particular location has qualified.

Mr. Sullivan stated that he is leary of trying to anticipate all the potential locations for additional landscaping. Ms. Kissel stated that it should be based more on individual projects. Mr. Scheer pointed out that we need an overall master plan to guide us rather than considering projects on an individual basis. Mr. Scholz stated that one approach is making it location specific and a more generalized way would be more policy approached.

Mr. Krout suggested that it would be helpful to look at a policy on cost participation. Mr. Scholz stated that would be one way to limit the participation if that would be a requirement.. Mr. Johnson noted that public way corridors was stalled at Planning Commission. It was proposed that the city would contribute funding for basic landscaping and if there was enhanced landscaping the surrounding property owners had to participate. Mr. Johnson stated that there is the environmental justice issue in that just because certain locations could afford a park improvement district, that may not be fair to others who cannot afford it.

Mr. Scheer stated that if the burden is on the staff to provide evidence on why it is a place that requires this, then the committee could function under those circumstances. Mr. Scholz stated that it would be helpful to have some baseline criteria. Mr. Scheer agreed. Mr. Zimmer stated that perhaps Mr. Johnson and he could get together prior to the next meeting to bring some further input and language. Mr. Sullivan asked to think about addressing more than just landscaping. Mr. Scheer stated that he believed the streetscape components will be harder to define, because the lowest denomination of landscaping has been defined.

Review of bridge design concepts, Antelope Valley project.

Mr. Zimmer distributed written comments from Mr. Oforah due to his absence at the meeting.

Mr. Zimmer stated that JAVA has formed a committee and has brought to this committee a design package recommendation.

Mr. Scheer asked Mr. Sullivan to review the core criteria. Mr. Sullivan stated that from the bottom of the deck down, based upon the volume of water that can travel through these bridges, they have concerns about the impediment. There is also a question about the overall length of the bridges. Generally, it has to do with the width of the pier. Mr. Sullivan continued by stating that one of the major issues was treating above the deck as more of a streetscape identity. The group came to a conclusion that the scale of O Street was important and should be a signature

bridge. Mr. Sullivan continued by stating that one major change from what was seen previously was the issue of eliminating the brick, so we are talking about pre-cast concrete or a cast in-place concrete. It is going to come down to cost and the quality of finish. It was also determined that the canted pier was desirable. Another element that was discussed was the idea of a lookout/central bench area on the O Street bridge. In detail, the railing has taken a little different look to get repetition of color and light. The entry piers were also discussed in that they should take a little more predominance, and that notion would carry over in to what has been dubbed the “little brother”. There was also discussion with the Capitol Environs Commission based on the J Street Bridge and decided that there should be a tie-in to these.

Mr. Sullivan stated that the general feeling of the committee was that as we compared different features, people liked the scale of the image as it was a more timeless look as compared to some of the streetscape examples that were given. Mr. Zimmer stated that there was strong consensus from the group that this design appeared simpler, stronger, and more civic in character.

Mr. Scheer commented that he feels this design is much improved over the previous ones and then asked about the purpose of the bridge and why we need to walk through the piers as it is not necessary. Mr. Sullivan stated in the discussion of having a signature bridge, and it became clear that the scale of this bridge was important. Mr. Johnson added that you have the sequential experience of walking through them and there is a pedestrian interchange between the bridge and someone walking through them.

In conclusion, Mr. Sullivan stated that two schemes were considered, and the other scheme was more “fun” and had more of a “streetscape” look, and it was brought out that what could make this the signature element to the rest of the development is that this has that strong architectural form. This is not to suggest that this design will not be a fun place. Ms. Kissel noted that she believed that this design looks more fun than the previous design.

Ms. Todd made a motion that this committee recognizes JAVA’s response to our advice that the design has advanced in clarity and connection between client request and designer response, and we see a much clearer, stronger statement in achieving the purposes of these important public features. Ms. Kissel seconded the motion.

Motion carried 4-0. Todd, Kissel, Scheer, Scholz voting ‘yes’. Sullivan abstaining. Eckert and Oforah absent.

Miscellaneous

Mr. Zimmer stated that he had a request from a newer restaurant at 15th and O Streets, which is called Osoburrito. They are requesting a sidewalk café, which will be on the front of the YWCA building to the corner of Centennial Mall. A condition of it would be that the fencing would have to be removed each night at 10:00 p.m. The owner has worked closely with the police because of the concern of that location being a hotspot on the weekends. However, the police captain is supportive of the sidewalk café concept as an enhancement to downtown.

The committee was concerned about the type of gate being proposed for the fence as the gate swings out in to the crowd. The committee supported this request, and wanted to add that we should not be overly restrictive on these enhancements.

Ms. Kissel made a motion to support this request, seconded by Ms. Todd.

Motion carried 4-0. Kissel, Todd, Sullivan, Scheer voting 'yes'. Scholz, Eckert and Oforah absent.

Review of Streetscape Improvements, North Bottoms Entry Sign Design and Locations

Mr. Sullivan stated that as part of the focus area of the plan, two of the immediate projects they wanted to incorporate included neighborhood signing and ornamental lighting. The neighborhood identified four entrance sign locations. Mr. Sullivan stated that they have proposed a different format compared to some other neighborhood signs that have been pole signs. They currently have a carved wood sign and they wanted to maintain that logo, but given the small scale of houses, they have proposed to bring the scale down to a ground sign, incorporating landscaping in front of and behind the sign. Landscaping has not been designed yet, but the Parks Department has agreed to maintain the landscaping.

Mr. Sullivan stated that in terms of lighting, the four corners of 10th Street would be anchored with an ornamental light fixture, and there would be approximately five fixtures per block face, and the last two lights would occur at the entry sign on the west side of 6th Street. The neighborhood wants a simple acorn style fixture. Mr. Sullivan added that this allows us to eliminate all the LES lightpoles.

Ms. Todd stated that she believes this is a good project and would support it as long as they do not trench under the trees. Mr. Sullivan stated that they would look into that concern and possibly other options for the lighting.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:54 p.m.

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